



For Immediate Release

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NEWS RELEASE

Testing Wild Birds for West Nile Virus

Wild birds will be tested again this year to learn whether they became ill or died because of West Nile virus, and the public's help is needed. Utah's wild bird surveillance season begins May 1 and continues until Oct. 15.

Wild birds are important indicators of West Nile viral activity in a given area, and viral activity in birds is often detected before human illness. This early detection provides health officials another opportunity to inform people in newly infected areas of preventative measures they can take to protect themselves and horses. The Division of Wildlife Resources encourages the public to participate in this program. If you see an ill or dead bird in your area, please contact the Division of Wildlife Resources office nearest you (please see the list at the bottom of this release for contact information).

Birds that will be tested in 2005 include birds of prey (hawks, etc.), birds of the Corvid family (ravens, crows, jays, etc.), and other birds that may be exhibiting neurologic symptoms (examples include birds that can't fly or that appear disoriented and lethargic).

Please visit the DWR's Web site (www.wildlife.utah.gov/wnv) for photos of the birds that will be tested this year.

It's important to note that not all birds may be suitable for testing. To determine if a bird is suitable for testing, please follow these guidelines:

- Is the bird a target species (raven, crow, jay or bird of prey. Also, does the bird appear to be ill or dying)?

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- Has the bird been dead less than 24 hours? (Evidence of decay would indicate the bird has been dead longer than 24 hours and is not suitable for testing.)
- Is there no other obvious cause of death (did the bird strike a window, was it killed by a cat or was it hit by a vehicle)?

For those with access to the Internet, the Division of Wildlife Resources has provided an online submission form to make reporting dead birds easier. More information regarding wild bird surveillance, including a bird identification page and the online submission form, can be found at:
www.wildlife.utah.gov/wnv

The Division of Wildlife Resources is working closely with other state and local agencies involved in West Nile virus surveillance and prevention, including the Utah Department of Health, the Utah Mosquito Abatement Association and the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food.

Since people may become infected with WNV through the bite of an infected mosquito, personal protection is key. West Nile virus can result in serious disease or death. It is important to follow these recommended guidelines:

- Protect from dusk to dawn. Mosquitoes that carry West Nile virus are most active during this time.
- Use DEET mosquito repellent according to label instructions.
- Make sure window screens and screened doors are in good repair. Small holes will allow mosquitoes to enter.
- Eliminate standing water around your home, such as old tires, cans, poorly kept swimming pools or any other source where stagnant water accumulates.
- Change water regularly (every two to three days) in birdbaths, outdoor pet dishes, etc.
- Aerate ornamental ponds or contact your local mosquito abatement district regarding treatment options.

For more information on personal protection and minimizing mosquitoes around your home, please visit: www.health.utah.gov

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Division of Wildlife Resources Regional Offices and WNV Contacts

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Southeastern Region (Carbon, Emery, Grand, San Juan- also eastern Wayne
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